Carpenter (my)

MISS CARPENTER'S REPORT.

The Prisons of the United States.

Miss Mary Carpenter, the tireless English philanthropist, has recently sent to the Prison Association of New York, addressed to Dr. Elisha Harris, its worthy correspondfollowing secretary, the ment of the condition and wants of the American prisons. We cannot afford to neglect her plain and candid advice. It will be observed that her criticisms of the prisons of New York are even more severe than those upon the prisons of Pennsylvania or Massachusetts; and that she fortifies her opinions by a terrible array of facts.

In compliance with requests I beg to submit to you the following observations upon Prison Discipline suggested by my recent visit to the United States:

The state has a right, for the protection of society, to deprive of liberty any person, man or woman, who is doing an injury to it by breach of the laws. But, in thus depriving him of his liberty, the state has no right to inflict upon him any unnecessary pain, and is bound to provide for his well-being, physical, intellectual, moral and religious, in every way consistent with the object of his imprisonment, which is the protection of society and the minimizing of crime. This object is inseparably connected with the reformation of the offender and the prevention of his future criminal conduct, which may therefore be as the immediate object regarded his imprisonment. If the shortness of his sentence of detention renders the first (reformation) impossible, the nature of his imprisonment should at any rate be of such a character, in accordance always with his real welfare, as to warn him from a repetition of his offence. The state, that is to say, the legislature, representing society, is responsible for the true development of this principle, and for the right treatment of all the persons whom it has deprived of liberty. In order to carry out in each state this general principle, which should be at the foundation of all treatment of criminals, the following conditions appear essential:

That a Board of Commissioners, selected by the legislature for their fitness for such a duty, and responsible to it, shall be appointed in every state to superintend and regulate the condition of all places of legal detention, and the treatment of the prisoners. The members of such board shall not be removable, except for due cause. Two of the board shall retire annually in rotation, but shall be eligible to reelection.

That the board shall have power to enforce the adoption, in all places of detention (jails, police stations and reformatories), of the general conditions appointed by the state for such places.

That the board shall have power to appoint the chief officers of all the state institutions, subject to the approval of the Governor and Council of the state; such officers (warden and religious and moral instructors) being irremovable except for misconduct or inability; and that it (the board) must sanction the appointment, by local authorities, of such officers in county jails or reformatories, and all places of legal detention under voluntary management; such officers being irremovable as above.

That the board shall appoint inspectors, who shall visit from time to time, at least twice a year, and whenever it may appear desirable, all jails and other places of legal detention, all persons in detention having the power of laying any grievance before them; and that the inspectors shall lay a monthly report before the board. The inspectors of all female jails and institutions to be ladies, who shall recommend to the board for approval all the chief female officials.

The board should present annually a complete report to the legislature.

Until some such boards as this are established, with the powers here briefly specified, there will be no security for the due protection of persons whose liberty has been forfeited by the state from serious injury, physical and moral, arising from bad system, improper treatment and the misconduct or neglect of officials. The following regulations should be made into law in each state:

1. Every prisoner to have a separate sleeping cell, which must be light, airy and well ventilated and warmed, and at least seven feet by twelve in dimensions.

2. Provision to be made for the religious, moral and intellectual instruction of each prisoner reading the Scriptures, and prayer being properly conducted every morning, with

schoolmaster.

3. All jail buildings to be constructed so as to carry out the object intended. They should be secure, commodious and healthful, with workshops and suitable chapels and schoolrooms; and, if possible, land adjoining and belonging to the premises. There should be provision for daily bodily exercise.

trades to the prisoners should be made regular officers of the prison.

5. No contracts ever to be made for the the work produced must be in accordance with the labor market.

6. All prisons for women to be entirely sep- and which are a radical evil. arate from those for men, and under female officers only.

7. All prisoners, on first entering the prison, month.

from the disregard of proper separation of untried prisoners.

Whenever prisons are not properly con- a very painful illustration. structed, it is impossible for officers, however to enforce necessary discipline under such con- ness and injurious conversation. ficial influence, as they might otherwise do.

sons, many of whom are very liable to had been five years alone in this. ficient both

York and Massachusetts, but the official re- of prisoners in a place so constructed, or pre ports of the condition of their prisons show vent it from being a school of vice?

two hours' instruction or intellectual exercise that most of them are perfectly unfit for their from 6 to 8 every evening, under an efficient object. They are, in many cases, absolutely The female prisoners are not demoralizing. properly separated from the males, nor are they under proper supervision. It is impossible to calculate the constant increase to the criminal population arising from this source

Innumerable instances might be found where prisoners convicted of some minor offence, 4. No persons to be employed with the pris- but otherwise having a tolerable character, oners who are not engaged by the warden have been ruined for life by such contact with and under his control. Persons who teach confirmed villains. I have not been able to learn that there is at present any sufficient authority to inspect these prisons; and it seems that when there is an attempt made to introlabor of the prisoners. Contracts made for duce a better system it is always liable to be neutralized by the constant changes of officers which at present occur from political causes,

The bad condition of many of these county prisons also leads to the commitment of many persons to the state prisons whose offences to be kept in strictly separate confinement; would not require more than a short impristhose in state prisons not less than six months, onment in a well-regulated county prison, and those in county jails not less than one with separate confinement, labor and a somewhat severe dietery. An efficient prison The police prisons and police stations should board, with authority to enforce proper regube under the same regulations: great evils arise lations in every county, would at once remove this evil, of which the county prison in the city of Philadelphia, which I visited, presents

There are in this prison four large wards. able and devoted to their work, to develop a three of which are for men. There is no arreformatory system. In ill-constructed prisons rangement for exercise or for moral or relithe prisoners are exposed to great demoraliza- gious improvement. I saw in the cells two or tion. Severity, and even great cruelty, has three prisoners together, without anything to been exercised on prisoners in the vain attempt prevent them spending the whole day in idleditions, and excellent wardens are unable to prisoners arrested on the preceding day arcarry out their plans or even to exercise a bene- rived to add to the evil. Although such prisons are intended for short sentences only. The condition of the large cities of this two life-sentenced prisoners were there concountry is evidently most dangerous, with an fined in separate cells. One said that he had increasing criminal population and the con- worked at shoemaking for seven years in a cell tinual immigration of thousands of per- until his eyesight became impaired, and he fall into crime. The existing jails* are insuf- any one be so treated in a Christian country? in size and number, and There were also lunatics in some cells. How the overcrowding of the prisoners necessari- is it possible for the good and devoted warden ly causes great demoralization among them. and the truly benevolent directors, who have I have not visited the county jails of New charge of that prison, to alter the condition

The fourth ward for women, which was sep-* Miss Carpenter here employs the word jail or gaol arated from the others, presented a different aspect. It had formerly been in the same

interchangeably for the word prison.

state, with two or three women in a cell to- to religious instruction, was passed by the congether, and two hundred or three hundred al- victs in the mournful seclusion of their narways there. A short imprisonment in associa- row cells. tion with their companions in crime had no terror for them. But a sufficient number of evils caused by the present contract system. new cells were added; every prisoner had a On the morning of my visit a prisoner escaped separate cell, and the well-conducted ones through the connivance of the employes of were allowed to work in a cheerful wash-house the contractor. I understand that a new jail in the prison garden, under proper supervision. is in contemplation. It will, I trust, be built A reformatory influence was at once experi- on a plan which will permit the full developenced, and the number of prisoners is now ment of the methods so successfully adopted less than one-half of what it formerly was.

constructed jails, necessitating a bad system." and day by day increasing the crime in its midst?

I visited the State Penitentiary at Sing Sing, which has been notorious for the barbarities practised in it, and permitted, because not prevented, by the state. I was aware that and acquainted with enlightened principles of prison discipline, had commenced reforms in it, but that these had been suspended by political changes. I had read in the English prints of the renewal of the atrocities. I now learned that the humane warden was again in charge, and I wished to learn the effect of the system he had adopted. In six months only he had succeeded in obtaining a moral influhad obtained their obedience without the em- convicts which might otherwise exist. ployment of any corporal punishment whatout a window, solely a grated door, opening acterized. into a partially ventilated corridor, so that impossible to confine during the day in there night. The smallness of the cells compelled the con- same general plan, namely, large associated gregation of the large mass of prisoners-eleven institutions, which, being enclosed in walls, hundred and fifty men-in one room at break. must be regarded rather as Juvenile Prisons. mainder of that day, which should be devoted from sixteen to eighteen years of age, who to moral and religious improvement as well as were likely to exercise

In this jail, as elsewhere, I heard of the great in the Irish convict system. I need not enter What present cost to a city or to a state is into the principles of that system, having fully too great, if made to diminish crime? Who explained them in my work, "Our Convicts," can calculate the evil arising to a city from ill- and in the smaller book entitled "The Crofton

A close study of the East Pennsylvania Prison inspires me with admiration of the benevolent intentions of those who constructed it, and of those who are now devoting much time and thought to the management of it. But it failed to convince me of the soundness some years ago a warden of benevolent heart, of the principles on which it is built and conducted.

> Through the overcrowding of this jail also, there were two prisoners in many of the cells. and there were two lunatics under confinement in it.

The State Prison at Charlestown, Massachusetts, has not the faults of construction which were so injurious at Sing Sing. The cells are generally light and airy, and the general arence over the prisoners, whom he treated like rangements good. But through the omission men. He had succeeded in making them un- of the first stage, of separate confinement, and derstand that he desired their welfare, while the non-introduction of other principles of the his duty compelled him to enforce strict disci- Crofton system, there did not appear to be pline. He had won their confidence, and he that ground for hope in the reformation of the

In the new prison which is in contemplaever. But the structure and existing regula- tion, it is to be hoped that arrangements will tions of the prison prevented his developing be made fully to develop the three stages of any good reformatory system. The cells were seclusion, association and comparative liberty small-three and one-half feet wide-and with- by which the Crofton or Irish system is char-

Before concluding, I would beg to make a prisoners few remarks on Juvenile Reformatories or addition to Refuges. I have carefully visited those in Even in some New York and Philadelphia. That at Westof their small cells there were two convicts. borough, in Massachusetts, is, I believe, on the fast and dinner-a system which is evidently The reformatory nature of the institutions. attended with much danger. There was no has been much impeded by the admisworship except on Sunday morning; the re- sion to them of young men and women jurious influence on the younger ones. The general experience of reformatory of a certified industrial school in Bristol, and managers in England would lead me strongly to recommend the adoption of agricultural schools on the family system, without walls. for all children under fourteen years of age-The children now in the institutions being removed into these, the buildings might be adapted to the purpose as juvenile prisons, on the Crofton system, for young persons under twenty, who are now, to their very great injury, associated with adult criminals.

I shall gladly lay before you, sir, the reports a small work of my own on the management of reformatories and industrial schools, which will give you some idea of the nature of our agricultural reformatories. The Connecticut State Reformatory and that in Ohio admirably develop the same principles. * * * *

MARY CARPENTER.

